

National Forests in North Carolina
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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Prescribed Burns to Promote Forest Health in 2013

ASHEVILLE, N.C., Feb. 5, 2013 – Forest Supervisor Kristin Bail with the National Forests in North Carolina today announced that the agency plans to restore between 8,000 and 10,000 acres of the Nantahala and Pisgah national forests in 2013 using prescribed burning.

“Fire has been part of Southern Appalachian forests for thousands of years, and we’ve learned that putting out every fire creates a buildup of forest debris, putting communities at risk and threatening forest health,” said Bail. “Using prescribed burns, we can mimic what would occur naturally and restore native trees and plants like table mountain pine and mountain golden heather, which are fire-tolerant.”

By using low- to medium-intensity prescribed burns, Forest Service employees plan to reduce overgrown vegetation and woody debris that could cause high-intensity wildfires that threaten lives, homes and public infrastructure. Catastrophic wildfires degrade forest health by scorching soils and killing many mature trees and other desirable plant species. Prescribed burning will result in healthier forests that are less congested, more biologically diverse and more resilient to threats from invasive plants and pests, such as southern pine beetle.

“Prescribed burning is essential for restoring our forests that are adapted to fire,” said Gordon Warburton, mountain ecoregion supervisor for the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. “Fire creates habitats that provide sprouts and berries, which are important food sources for wildlife. We must also remember that fire is critical for maintaining many oak species that produce acorns for wildlife.”

All prescribed burns are completed by trained wildand fire professionals in accordance with detailed plans, which include desired weather conditions and other strict safety parameters, as well as modeling to reduce the effects of smoke.

“Safety is the top priority of our prescribed burning program,” said Bail. “We take the safety of neighbors and the health of our forests very seriously.”

Scientists have found that fire has been a part of western North Carolina’s forests for at least 4,000 years and possibly up to 12,000 years. Lightning strikes ignited many fires, and Native

Americans introduced prescribed burning to clear land and for regeneration purposes. European settlers continued the practice. These frequent, low-intensity fires shaped healthy forests in western North Carolina.

For more information on prescribed burning in the Nantahala and Pisgah national forests, visit www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc and click on “Restoring Fire to the Mountains.” You can also [click here](#).

The Nantahala and Pisgah national forests encompass more than 1 million acres and receive 6.5 million visitors every year.

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